

THE FIRST WARDEN'S
(1) *AND OTHER POEMS*

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The First Wardens

•The  Co. •

The First Wardens

Poems

WILLIAM J. NEIDIG

*"And on the key
Of the great arch were figures militant,
Who battled long their standard there to plant"*

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To the Memory of
my Mother

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THE KING'S FOOL

A Fool it was, and took his Soul
 Within his hollowed hands;
He took his Soul and smoothed it calm,
 And loosed its strained bands.

“O Soul,” he cried, “you bear the stain
 Of chain-gyves interwove!
Who did this thing?” The Soul replied:
 “‘It was the friend I love.”

“O Soul, you have a flaming brand
 Burned on your nakedness!
Who did this thing?” The Soul replied:
 “‘That was a pure caress.”

“O Soul, a fissure shows your heart
 Like wound of bloody sword!
Who did this thing?” The Soul replied:
 “‘That was a friendly word.”

The King's Fool

“O Soul, you shrink within my hand,
I scarce see where you be!
Who did this thing?” The Soul replied:
“A woman pitied me.”

The Fool laid down his Soul and wept,
And knelt him down beside;
He soothed and questioned all the night,—
No Soul of him replied.

A WOMAN'S RING

I

THE CRY

If I smooth out, in secret dim recess
Of this cool closed page, my wrinkled thought ;
If seeming I do guard the deep impress
Of joggled types too closely, or in aught
Withhold myself from you, my husband dear ;
If in my pride, I say, I thrust my face
Into this cold, sweet pillow lying here,
And whisper out my soul in that lone place,
That you would clasp me to your lips and breast,
Not as a child delighting in a toy,
But so to set my woman's doubts at rest,—
Forgive me, love ! it is because great joy
Hangs trembling o'er my hand, and I, your wife,
Have no more strength to add it to my life.

II

WHY SO COLD?

Has my poor beauty lost its light so soon,
Or am I cheapened, loving you too much?
Last night a primrose, kissing with the moon
To-day in withered rags, with fifty such?
Ah, no! my glass is better guide than that!
I am not less than fair, no more than you.
No, no! Here in my cheek where beauty sat,
Still is the seat where girlhood burns anew;
And this white marble, where you praised my brow,
It hath not weathered to less spotless rime!
Then why so cold, my husband, to me now,
Whose cheeks were glowing too a little time?
Sure, when I flush and tremble at your side,
Wonder could nowhere but in me abide.

III

O, NOT INDIFFERENCE!

O, not indifference! Ring the passing bell
For the white company of all our days!
Stamp into ruins the too fragile shell
We drank from, you and I! the morning haze,
The splendor of the crowning sun at noon,
The long swift shadows slipping down the slope,
The stain of sunset rainbows, fled so soon,
Blot it all out, the memory with the hope!
Yes, break the windows in our house of life,
With every sacred witness of our bliss,
And say to me, "You are no more my wife,
I love you not!" Say this to me, say this:
So shall you, O my husband, swiftly slay,
Not kill me slow by holding me away!

IV

REASSURANCE

You love me! my dear husband, now I know!
If I have in my foolish woman's pain,
When life hung heavy on my eyes, breathed low,
To myself only, but a word in vain;
If I have been less than a wife to you
Ev'n in this secret place, with moan and sigh
Doubting my sweetheart lord if he be true:
Forgive me, it was Folly spoke, not I.
You love me! Yes, you kissed me tenderly,
And held me fast against your loyal breast:
Kissed me and told me, told poor wicked me,
Until I did not know which ear was guest!
Since love is in the world, speak kindly still,
So I may love and listen all I will!

V

THE DOUBT

Was I once fair, not ugly in your sight?
Admired, possessed,—though but as a rich stone,
To be put on or off as you had light,
Or like a coat, by weathers? Was I won,
Borne from my home for fair? My husband dear,
I could forgive you that you loved my eyes,
Or loved the lips that tremble, others near:—
The bee loves thus the bell where sugar lies;
I could forgive you that you deemed me fair,
Loved my lithe movements, or some piquant toss
Of my poor head beneath its weight of hair;
I could forgive all this, but not its loss.
If I was wed for beauty, let me die:
My cheeks are swollen and my eyes are dry.

VI

GROPINGS

Yes, I can read it plain : you are in love,
And not with me ! The words are firm and black ;
I do not falter at the inky grove
Of oak-gall letters in my path, alack.
No more with me ! A stranger hath your heart !
I trace with my dry pen the knotted line.
O, I am calm : I neither weep nor start,
Neither my voice to grief nor rage resign,
But like some princely rajah, weigh the cost,
Add off my rubies to the reddest grain,
And smile my hurt to sleep as nothing lost.
So were I verily your wife again !
If I but knew who stole you from me, dear,
Mercy were swift to deal with me as her !

VII

PRIDE OF WOMEN

But no; I would not own both power and right;
It were poor vengeance to unfold by day
The petals blackened by foul worms at night;
Let me still seem to love you, all I may,
Make bold pretence, lest those who rail should deem
We two were less than children of the sun,
Bathed in the light that lingers, flesh and gleam
Of that old glow in Eden's aisles begun!
But touch not on her name! no, not by chance,
Not as you name the casual things of life,
For I should feel your too-indifferent glance,
And feeling, seem no more, but be, your wife!
I am but woman, dearest,—bitter quick
To blow a coal or snuff a smoking wick!

VIII

THE WHOLE TRUTH

As when assassin sighs by desert springs,
No murder in them, fearing poison there;
As when in dreams we flee from monster things
That leave no footprints to our waking care;
As when, in an ill-lighted, crowded hall,
Men are stampeded by some vague alarm,
The taste of smoke, or glow upon the wall
Of lightning flash, to do their bodies harm:
So have I perished hourly, and no cause,
Deeming my fountains poisoned, or my throat
Torn into whip-cords by some tiger's claws!
So have I stumbled at the vital note!
No cause, I said? You loved none other she,
Yet had at heart your wisdom more than me?

II

IX

HEART-HUNGER

Only for you to lead me by the hand ;
To leave the day of large things in its tomb ;
To bend in spirit o'er me with the strand
That holds the household shuttle to the loom ;
To be my quick right arm in present strife,
Not waiting for far battles never fought,
But showing how so much I am your wife
In little things I occupy your thought !
Ah, could you love me with such minor fire
And walk with service ere her time be past,
Life would be infinite beyond desire,
And love a benediction to the last !
So should we tarry in the blessed zone
Of utter worship, the years all our own !

X

INDICTMENT

So blind with miser selfness? Ah, you are!
O, when the sun leaps downward in his course
Unswerved a gnat's-breadth by the nearest star;
When this forked river at its mountain source
Lies broad and tanned as where it tastes the sea,
And loquats ripen without leaf or flower,
And every root alone sustains the tree,
And each half measured singly is the hour;
When rainbows with green-crimsons are not stained,
And music strips her chords to the key-note,—
Say then, then also, not in manner feigned,
But with the ice of winter in your throat,
“My life was all self-centered: see how I
Prove single good, married felicity!”

XI

THE WIFE

Yes, you have bent your arrow to the bow
And shot it straight : you would not be denied.
Wealth and great name are yours : I know, I know,—
The world has laid such unguents to your pride.
My husband, yes : you strung your honors here,
The fruit of all the days of all your life,
And I, not knowing them so costly dear,
Wore them a trustful moment as your wife.
Yes, and must wear them still, their splendor gone,
While precious love lies sleeping in your eyes
With smiles and tears, like dew-drops far withdrawn
To heart of the wild-rose where honey lies.
O, deem me not ungrateful, that my heart
Hungers for sweets not of your gain a part !

XII

ABSOLUTION

You could not help it, dearest ; no, I say,
You shall not be reproached with baseness too,
Ev'n in this journal hidden safe away ;
On me the blame, not you, no, never you !
For oh, you showed me each ambitious peak
From that first day, showed me, with misty breath,
And told me how these summits you would seek
Up the white trail with single mind till death ;
Therefore if I love not the gleaming trail
So well as I love you, and linger so,
Sighing for summer warmth without avail,
No blame on you, my husband of the snow !
No, no ! nor shall you ever guess the pain
With which my broken feet press on again !

ALVAH AND AZUBAH

Arose the woman then and faced the black
Gun-muzzles, where they eyed her ; for the man,
Not she, is pardoned ; Alvah gains his life.
Not she, not frail Azubah. Then she spake,
Her voice a vibrant peal behind closed doors,
Half loud, half wasted, as though all the bells
Of faith and fear were ringing in her soul.
But Alvah gave no sign : lest his sealed pardon
Should fade like bubble breathed on, his locked lips
Refused farewell, and he unheeding turned
From her who loved him, to the life he loved.
Which seeing, she grew pale as woman dead.

“How whitely lies this snow on my cold friend !
How soon, O Alvah ! hath this bloom of frost
Brightened thy virtue ! Oh, I deemed thy love
The very Maytime anchored in the year
As oak in the forest ; deemed thy spoken music

No protestation of dead boughs in the wind,
But very heart of the harp, soul of the soul!
And now thou standest frosted, alien, dead,
Ice on thy boughs and winter in thy veins!

“One moment since, how we together kneeled
Hand in warm hand before the spattered wall,
Counting the bullet lead-marks on the stone:
Waiting the word to close out all our light,
Life’s last, death’s first parole, the border-word!
And then, instead of that dread word, how still
Muttered the mulling priest, and clattering hoofs
Made dilatory progress down the road
An age or two; and we looked life in the eye,
We twain together! Then one turned to me,
Saying, if I had word to leave on earth
More, I must speak it now,—no word but one,—
For Alvah hath reprieve from the good Queen.
The woman’s sentence stands. He then explained
That sin in woman is like pitch in snow;
That she who is the measure and the light.

The promise and fulfillment, depth and breadth,
Of daily life,—true compass to the North,
Plummet to test walls by, the level sea,
One of God's host star-flung across the sky,
And other beautiful vagueness men have held,—
That she may not defile her beauty lightly.
That if she only were less shamefully
Scornful of law and name, less stubborn in
Her wrenched allegiance, deeming it a virtue
Not to renounce until she is renounced,
Repentance were not so late; but praised be God
The fear of sinful death redeems the man!
The knot of the matter being, Alvah there
By timely penitence retrieves his life,
Builds dykes and saves his towers; whilst I, a
 woman,
Eager to die in glory, as I dreamed,
Wake in this crowded empty field to die.
“Poor life: ’twas dear to him! Alvah, farewell!
Alvah! he will not even toll goodbye

From his black belfry : will not say Godspeed !
Not twist the shuttered windows for one last
Last look on me that thought I loved him well :
That loved him well, alas ! and love him still !

“He will not turn for me? He will not see?
Kind globe the Earth, in all your vales, in all
Your fragrant forests, all your mountainside,
Plains, deserts, glacier-peaks, wherever love
Treads or shall tread, in stillness of what night
Or glare of noon, if there be any dell
So inaccessible to dust of him
Living or dead, no atom of himself
May lodge in it, by wind, rain, snow or ice,
Earthquake or cataclysm, man or beast,
O let me there be laid to lie at rest !
Alvah ! I well have loved what you are not,
Repenting me more than you ever can
What was indeed a sin : God pity me !

“Stand straight ? and face the front ? I thank you, sir.

Well, then! I pin this knot above my heart
So, and you aim, no wavering, at the pit,
And the ripe fruit is seeded. That is done.
Now, when you are ready . . . Ah!"

Far down the road
A foaming horse throws out his shaggy knees,
Bearing his master to cathedral-close
For shrift of easance. Alvah hath reprieve.

THE FIRST WARDENS

I

They sealed the sepulchre with what pure lid
The angel lifted, that first Easter morn ;
No silver laced, nor gold the marble hid,
Nor wealthy woods their cavern might adorn,
Nor sweep of lanthorned dome, nor pyramid
Of stains and glazings ; nor, in bronzes borne,
Incense past price made fragrant their rude room :
They waived all that, the monks that kept the tomb.

II

Down the still lanes of peace they walked alway,
Where saintly lineaments grow softly clear
In sunset legend : breathing but to pray ;
Drinking deep draughts of easement all the year :
Not beauty's strenuous wine, but every day
The nectar from calm fountains, and the cheer
Of faith secure that blesses with its peace
Soul, sense and mind : faith hath such sure surcease.

III

No tarnish their white master might condemn ;
No stress, no conflict, nothing of defeat ;
Not any eager plucking at the stem
That droops with fragrant fruit in gardens sweet ;
No : they must win their deathless diadem
Unstained by sully of the field or street ;
They bound on cavern altars all their thought,
Which leapt up smoke-like for the peace they sought.

IV

They kept no day with lilies of delight ;
They were not first with robes for Easter-time ;
They were not first to sing the stone of night
Rolled from the buried ; were not first to climb
One eastern peak where splendor bursteth bright ;
They did not run with chisel or with rime
In beauty's salutation on the earth,
The great first souls in enterprise of worth.

V

Ah, no; they waived the beautiful and fair;
There was no easelessness in their confine;
He that must mould the marble was not there,
For peace was there, and not unrest divine;—
The master's burin fails for all his care;
The maker traces still his dim design;
The seer rues his vision; naught is right
In sight of poet or in prophet's sight.

VI

No; they held off from beauty, lest their peace
Should fade like vapor breathed upon bright steel;
They could not rise from their redeemed knees;
They could not hear it that sweet matin-peal
Called them to glorious task, but by degrees
Crept from this life in thought as they did kneel.
So saith dim-lettered legend, and it saith
Their names are no more known, nor when their
death.

VII

They passed ; and Constantine set his hard brand
Upon the stone, and builded wondrously
Over above where his scarred shields did stand ;
His captains added gold from oversea ;
And tessellated pavements by their hand
Were laid in splendid naves ; and on the key
Of the great arch were figures militant
Who battled long their standard there to plant.

VIII

Aye, battled long, in such fierce whirlwind war—
Kings, poets, builders, Davids from the field,
Wide-visioned Solomon with plummet-star
Proving his towers—all, all upon that shield
Made desperate cause for place in glory's car ;
Among the zenith planets, half-revealed
To tense white worshipers from far-off lands,
They battled long, with smoke-stained knotted
hands.

IX

They battle still : for beauty hath no bell
To toll her legions into beds of ease ;
Her loom knows no repose ; she sees not well
How monks may weave their narrow convent-frieze ;
Her cloth, as cobweb filmy, doth excel
Time in its width ; and all her knights may seize
Of gold and steel she twists into its weft
While gold endures, and precious steel is left.

X

They battle still ! the sepulchre is still
The symbol of our winning : its high dome,
Dashed with the spray of conflict, crowns the hill
Of this world's war, unshaken by its foam ;
Still do we bear our bounty to the mill
Of hard endeavor ; and we gather home
High splendors, virtues, burdens, golden deeds,
In measure of our hopes and of our needs.

XI

Oh, still the flail must purge the temple mart!
He that would light this world unto his dream
Still seize the brand of battle, and depart
Upon the crowded highway with his beam!
Yes, whether poet of the burning heart,
Or prophet with the truth of God in him,
He must work beauty on the world in strife,
Or pass, and yield no solace of his life!

XII

Ah, beauty was not dead, not dead, that day
When Pilate forced the shining chancel door,
The slender chancel door that barred his way,
Whose workmanship no Pilate could restore!
And think you 'twas not raised from where it lay
To stir men's souls by all it cost the more?
By all it cost, whose wonder will not die,
The love, the care, the travail pure and high?

XIII

Dear Christ! so long ago, so long ago!
The years of labor and ripe discontent,
How they are fair! How long the symbol bow
Of armèd centuries in stone hath bent
O'er the great sepulchre to hold it so!
Never, O never may that bolt be spent!
We need its strength and beauty: we would part
Not with one whit of all its costly art!

The story is that the true cavern of the sepulchre of Christ was occupied, during the second or third century, by a company of religionists; and that when Constantine usurped the tomb he raised his basilica over the rock they had guarded.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

They came and kneeled. The kings of all the world
Stole down the star-lit lane, their banners furled,
Ev'n to the manger, and at dim midnight
Laid this world's goods before the Child of light.

I saw a magus hoar with frost of trade ;
He kneeled beside a plate of costly jade,—
A stone rejected, now become the head
And glory of the hall, with symbols spread.
He brought a grail, of gules, from Pharaoh's seat,
Twined all with tendrils for remembrance meet ;
Balsams he brought, for wounds, and jars of myrrh
Sealed with the seals of Herod's magister ;
He brought sheet-lightnings caught up in a gem,
And inky seas, and foaming pearls with them,
And curious beaten network of red-thorn
On frosted bronze, Christ's temples to adorn.

The Adoration of the Magi

28

And then with flaming hands he heaped rich gold
Upon the mighty jade, all it would hold.

I saw a magus ridged with thews of steel ;
He was bowed down beneath a shining wheel,
The symbol of his hope and of his toil.
He laid it king-like on the sacred soil,
Then, as upon an altar, he strewed there
Palm-sprays bedewed with jewels of his care.
A sceptre fashioned from a shepherd's crook,
Down its light shaft old letters from a book :
A seamless cloak wove on a virgin loom :
These all he added to his altar's bloom.
And lest these fade, gold from the mines he poured
In brightness as the chariot of the Lord.

The third sage that I saw, with dreamy eyes
Brought visions Mary's child may not despise :—
An etched plate, deep and dark—Gethsemane,
Or some Christ-passion and no stars to see ;
He brought a lidded casket lined with lead,

That held the lettered tablets of the dead ;
The city of the Lord, in tender thought
Of laced and fretted ivory, he brought ;
He brought a scroll of wonders—poesies,
And tales prophetic stained with evening skies ;
And last, his dearest gift, the blazing keys
That open every door : of stamped gold these.

Ah me ! they brought their gold to heaven's hall,
But when they peered behind the gilded stall,
It was not Christ dawned golden on their sight !
They saw the Mammon Child that Christmas night !
Yes, each brought costliest tribute he could save ;
Each took away the costliest thought he gave :
For then and now the Christ is as the gift ;
We find our faith behind each veil we lift ;
And then as now when men have gold to do,
It hardens to a god for worship too !

Do we most value what our labor brings,
Bow down to gilded art and showy things ?

The Adoration of the Magi

30

Is there no virtue in the moulded wheel
To snatch men's souls to glory where they kneel?
Is so the blare more than the workmanship?
Is now no joy upon the trembling lip
To sing the gleam of beauty or of worth
That is foretaste of heaven upon earth,
Save it bring plunder home, and shining praise?
Are we so fallen upon merchant days?
Then are we still in worship as of old
Running to Christ with merit of our gold,—
And still as then we see the changeling nod,
The end of all men's labor each man's god!

WINE OF LAUREL

Now, who are thou in bright moonlight

Dost rise from bloody bed?

Thou Shape, am I a scourge of souls,

To seek quarrels with the dead?

Now, who art thou with hungry hands

Dost ride down dead man's lane?

Thou Shape, I slew thee, bones and all!

Dost thou seek death again?

I slew thy set and gleaming eyes:

I slew thy dripping heart:

I slew the hatred on thy breath,

Dead man as thou art!

Yea, horseman of the shining eyes,

I slew thee, root and stem!

I have no quarrel with dead men's skulls

To ring my steel on them!

Then swerve thou not, thou grisly gleam,
 With death-dew on thy brow,—
Though thou shouldst ride through stone and steel
 Thou canst not fright me now :

For thou art but a dead man's bones,
 Tossed out with mouldy things,
And I am master of the field,
 The friend and fear of kings !

VICTORY

I

O strength that strideth over broken ground
Into the dusk! O vigor unrenowned!
Toil-tempered Demos! Yes, the victor still,
Fighting for foothold on his harrowed hill!

II

To strive, and fall at last, and conquer so!
This shaft in the world-forest, thus to grow,
To raise its head, and die,—and with its blood
Seed the inert to-morrows unto good!

III

Where was the dawn of battle down the race?
In what far sunset shall the umpire's mace
Beat back the hills of war, fill the last gulf
'Twixt fang and fang, cheetah and shaggy wolf?

IV

The panther in the glade still pays his feud ;
And he that slays, his breast is ruddy-hued ;
Aye, both have left strong sons to feed the fire ;
Aye, harder wood than this shall top the pyre !

V

Since that first angry ant-hill rose in wrath,
Poured out his hosts to scourge the forest-path
Of its young menace, Christ hath dreamed and bled—
And still the grasses redden with blood shed !

VI

Aye, my brown brother-plowman ! when the stone
That crowns to-morrow's dead lies with your own
Crumbled in ash a hundred thousand years,
A plowman still shall sow his field with tears !

VII

With blood, and tears, and seedings as to-day !
Aye, seedsman ! thou shalt wear thy life away
Upon the soil reluctant, wheat and tare,
Until thy toiling children shroud thee there !

VIII

Aye, till thy manhood's evening shalt thou be,
Brown seedsman, brawny-armed and bold of knee
As he thy Tubal sire, to hold in trust
Forge, share and sword from capture and from rust !

IX

Aye, the last acorn on the tree of life,
Flower of those hundred thousand years of strife,
Still must it suck its fibre from the storm,
And fight for sunshine still to keep it warm !

X

And he that grafts his bitter stock long time
With this and that of sweetness at its prime,
Shall he, engrossèd in the laden bough,
Still scorn such hardy ichor, all as now?

XI

Oh, shall he cherish still the jeweled sword
Of golden Caesar, win the golden word,
And fall asleep, long seated at the feast,
To dream of golden cities in the East?

XII

Master of fairest-fortuned flower that blows,
To dream of some far-favored fairer rose?
All those slim bridges from the soul to earth,
His senses, sealed to snow-bells of no worth?

XIII

Ah, my brown giant : life's last victory
Is brimming cup enough for you and me !
Deep cup enough—to fight, and fight, and fall,
Until your blood is reddest blood of all !

XIV

Long hath that goldsmith Day the jeweled skies
Set forth for Night to sell where no one buys ;
And he will take them in and set them out
And polish them still longer, do not doubt.

XV

Aeons and cycles round the white abyss
Their burning took them, fiery-hued ere this ;
Cycles and aeons must they burnish still
Down harshest night, their lustre to fulfill.

XVI

Until each myriad moon is ground to dust :
Each smouldering sun, against the wheel a-thrust,
Lies all dispersed in stain of Milky Way ;
Until the kindlier, softer, final day !

XVII

Aye, till the Ultimate Law life's little laws
Transcends in larger cycles, end and cause,
Strife shall not lose her sceptre,—nor the brawn
Earned of the soil be held from earth in pawn !

XVIII

Then stand thou fast above this battle-mould :
For thou shalt plant it thick, and not with gold,—
Yea, reap, O seedsman ! as thy hand hath sped,
Ere good-night belfry tolls thy brawn to bed !

XIX

Oh, stand thou steadfast where thy frame was won!
Be sure thy steel shall quicken, ere the sun,
Drooping anew from stalk in earth's dull pot,
Strews Bloom-o'-Stars o'er the King's garden-plot!

XX

Sweet are the violet fields where we must fight;
White blows the lily where we weep to-night;
Red blooms the blood of saints, where we should
 pray:
So life makes victors of us, all she may!

THE WHITE GUEST

“Bind her brow austere with laurel ;
Place in her hand th’ oblivious lyre ;
Hide from her eyes all strife and quarrel ;
Deck her this once in silk attire !

“Plait her dark hair with snowiest grasses :
No red-eyed daughters of the earth ;
No palsied posies from the morasses ;
Hers the glad ichor : wine and mirth !

“Stir her with no funeral measure :
She shall indulge the wine’s caprice ;
Aye, she shall be well wed to pleasure !
This is no day for song to cease.

“She shall be blind to Cain’s black brow ;
She shall be deaf to Esau’s grief ;
She shall not waste her features now
In tears, and furrowed unbelief.

“She shall be merry—aye, she shall!
She shall be glad—aye, laugh for glee!
Aye, glad at this our festival!
Aye, choked with song and laughter, she!”

Now is the stain of the grape on the fingers :
Now is the breath and glare and tumult
Fierce of the feast : now is the zenith :
The utter gleam of shimmering purple,
Of crystal gold-purpled : the shiver of argent
And ardor of rubies : the snow and the fire
And bloom of the banquet : now is the summit !
Calm midst the clamor of throats, and the flourish
And bravery of pledges, with face unsearchable,
Seated on dais majestic, the guest,
Her awful features shrouded in marble,
Broodeth in silence ; with eyes unclouded
She of the mountains watcheth the wassail :
Watcheth decanter, tankard and flagon,
Jorum and cruise, kiss lips in her honor :
Watcheth the pounding of stein and beaker,

Posnet and pipkin and horn : what chalice
Or stoup will hold wine, or stand in the pledges ;
Equally each with each in bumpers
Challenging her, the mighty presence,
Alas, with toast unsteadily fashioned !

She, the one-minded daughter of worship,
Sitteth as marble : broodeth in silence :
Riseth, 'mid dripping of pledges, in silence :
Fareth away, with face unsearchable,
Far from the glittering temples, the service
And priesthood of clamor : the praise and the pledges
Spread for her whose smile is not flattered.

II

“Oh, who hath heard her high decree,
And where is she, that she may heal
And save us, make us free?
Have ye not seen her lightly steal,
Skirting the city's tumult, bound

For countryside, where health is found?
Oh, where is she, that we may touch
Her garment's hem, for virtue such
As lies therein, that we may hear
Eloquent wisdom from her lips,
And bow our heads, and worship there,
And bless her healing finger-tips?

“Evil is grown up with the good?
Justice hath no sure abode?
Men ask with stained lips, And where
Is this unsullied presence fair?
They have not seen her: if she be
Filling her arms upon the lea
With native poppies, or have climbed
Over the mountain, how shall they,
Imagination all begrimed,
Celebrate her praise to-day?
Let her come forth and stand here now,
That men again may crown her brow!”

Far from the praise : far, far from the fruitless
Praise inconsequent, far hath she wandered
From this, from this ! Deep in her forests,
Long hath she strayed, where health is, and vigor,
Shaping her verdict, burning her statute,
On tree and rock ; on tablets of granite
She of the giants writeth for giants
During the ages message unforgeable :
Not here, not in democracy's fiat,
Not in the clamorous purple of wassail,
But one with the laws and forces of God :
"Freedom hath never smiled on men
Save they were strong : how often, then !"

III

Lo in the East
Soft on the heights
The light of a glory,
The glow of a presence,
Staining the edge

Of night, and melting
The shadows of omen!
Long hath she wandered:
Long hath the darkness
Compassed her people:
Now is it morning!
Now is the fervor
Of day, and the heat
And light of the sun!

She cometh, she cometh, she cometh,
She cometh to welcome her sons:
Her chariot emblazoned with fire:
Her trumpets the bellowing guns!
She openeth her gates through the mountains:
She placeth her seal on the plains:
She marketh the sites of her cities:
Hope beateth high in her veins!
Where are the myrmidons now
Up from the valleys of sloth?
The flush of a day new-born

Lies on her radiant brow :
The pestilent children of scorn,
Are they fled to their pestilent slough?

Does it not stir you, citizens,
Who pride in her white residence,
To see these banners bold?
This resolute San Francisco, this
Free city, this cosmopolis,
This civilization's eager strife,
This multitudinous busy life—
Does it not stir you, citizens?
Why, under Saturn there is not
A state more richly veined with gold,
A soil more prodigal, a spot
More adequately blessed of God!
If mountain-minded, as of old,
She would leave those peaks untrod,
E'en those Sierras hoar, her hours
To spend midst California's flowers!
Does it not stir you, citizens,

That by this matchless crowded bay
Freedom is come for residence,
To stay here, if she may?

So men to her and each be true,
Bringing bright God-deeds as her due,
Freedom will here abide: and thou,
O vessel of the westward prow,
And thou, O seaman, know long time
Her, and her starry brow sublime!

LEX MUNDI

I rule: my word is on the sea
And continents of eld; each knee,
Since and till chaos, bends to me.

I am the East and West: my veins
Are hot with conflict; on my plains,
Smoking of war, I heap my grains.

I am the North and South: my ice
Lies carved in no sun-wrought device;
My flowers, with travail I paid their price.

I am the Old and New: I sought,
Fought, conquered, and grew strong; and naught
Of let has softened the steel I wrought.

I stand till the last victorious toast:
Pledge of a people toil-engrossed:
Freedom, who loveth the victor most!

Mine is the brawn of earth's old war;
Who bred these bones, strong ancestor,
His flint be still accounted for!

THE BUOY-BELL

Bell! Bell!

Bell that rideth the breakers' crest,
Bell of the shallows, tell, O tell :
The swell and fall of foam on the sand,
Storm in the face from sea to land,
Roar of gray tempest : these, O bell,
What say these of the West?
Tell! O tell!

Bell! Bell!

Crowding the night with cries, O tell :
What of the moorings in the silt?
What of the blooms that drift and wilt?
What of the sea-chest wrenchèd wide?
Is it safe harbor by thy side?
Bell that rideth the breakers' crest,
What say these of the West?
Tell! O tell!

Bell! Bell!

It is a dirge the bell is tolling,

A dirge for the silent dead,—

With the cold sea rolling, rolling, rolling,

Rolling each restless head.

Bell that rideth the breakers' crest,

O, when will they lie all quietly,

Untossed by the slow sea-swell:

Nor breakers brave on the gray sea-beach,

Nor ceaseless crash of the cresting sea,

Nor booming headland's sullen knell,

Nor bell, for elegy?

When is the last tide out of the West,

And the last restless dream for each?

Tell! O tell!

Toll! toll! toll!

Toll for the ebbing tide:

Toll for the lives that outward ride:

Toll for the deep-delved cold sea-seat:

Night in the West at every beat!

Toll! toll!

SEA BURIAL

A winding sheet, a broadside for the brave,
A light on the blue sea one instant known,
A work unfinished— Where his dust was strewn
Is no more battle. Sea-moss shades his grave;
Coolness of coral spans his pearl-strewn cave:
Nor Pharaoh's vaults more deaf to the sands blown,
Nor silk cocoons more soft, in Maytime grown,
Before the summer frees the textile slave!
O give me, Star, my rest beneath the sea!
There let me lie, and let the deaf swells roll,
Or craggy cliffs, like belfries wild and free,
In palpitating peals my requiem toll!
But grant me first my work may finished be:
No sap-wood, when the axe strikes through the boll!

THE SOLDIER'S LOCKET

Bend thy clear eyes upon this knotted ground;
Smooth out the clods where these old fortunes lie:—
O locket Lura, earth how old and dry
That once thou blessedest! Do thou still this mound
Plant with thy rose of faith, and it be crowned!
O, do thou still kneel by my grave when I,
Trenched in this alien clay, no longer sigh,
And with sweet holy flowers my dust surround!
Thou lingerest far, alas, from murdered me,
Where the white roses grow in gardens blest!
Then in God's gardens rest my merit now:
O, there my soul's safe sanctuary be,—
And, though I see thee not, thy locket brow
Lie blushing long upon my crimsoned breast!

CHRISTMAS NIGHT

They crowd from the black belfries; misty forms,
Padres with swinging censers, neophytes,
In slow white funeral choir—clandestine rites
As of the dead — sweep shrineward. “Midnight
warms,”

Sighs a near shape, which stands, with tossing arms;
“Alas!” and echoes from the vaulted heights,
“Alas! alas!” They surge: and now he smites;
Hot steams the incense-breath, and all in swarms
Pale vaporous things press round a bloody bier,
And sigh and sigh: “O dreadful angry soul,
Strike quickly, lest thy bride forever here
Shrink from thy knife, and ever grow more fair!”
Ah me! that Barbara’s bells should softly toll
This Christmas night, and she and he be there!

THE TEMPLE OF ART

Poets, make room! one other at the shrine
Of pale resolve and bitter compassment
Kneels with his candle for the flame slow-sent!
Lo, on the altar writ with names that shine
He, too, would weigh out myrrh and fragrant pine!
Bright dreams! white deeds, who knows? much
splendor lent
To the wide halls of Truth! new rainbows bent!
The candid temple with new light divine
Vaulted, till thought is silent, beauteous place!
O Heart of Fire, bleed on this candle small!
Let it be named with them that kindle grace
Along blear isle and arch and beetling wall!
So may the world it with the rest embrace,
Saying, this lamp hath light to give the hall.

MORRO CASTLE

I

It is Havana's rock of sighs,
And from her weary walls doth rise
What whisper of the clank of chain :
Riseth what wasteful dull disdain?
Where battlemented Morro breaks
The still blue sky, where ocean shakes
Upon the tunneled flint his locks,
To dry them on Cabana's rocks,
Cometh a woman day by day
With tears to wear the stone away :
With tears to melt Esteban free.
Ah, girl! thou art not calm as he!
 "Morro! O Morro!"

II

"What if her tears are but begun,
And he shall see her eyes?" quoth one.

They guide her down the mazy deep;
The salt ooze drippeth in a dream;
What reckoneth she of dungeon-keep?
She treadeth where fair jewels gleam.
They bring her to the tamer's cage:
Well may he roar, well may he rage,
Her best-beloved, to see her there,
To see her sweated brow and hair!
Ah, rock of sorrows, thou hast wrung
What from Esteban's halting tongue?
"Morro! O Morro!"

CUBA!

Cuba, when I regard how thou art torn,
And by whose judgment fall the flails of war;
When I peruse each forfeit welt and scar,
And think how sword and ermine, still forsworn,
Record their shame; how hardly to be borne
Is furious Tacon's fury still; how far
Felicity doth lie from temple bar
Where is no justice; when I see thee shorn,
O thou dark-futured pleader! of thy grace,
Whose chiefest crime, thou wast too fair of face,—
Mine is no tongue to trust! the captain's hand
Doth hang too ruthless-heavy on thy door,
And he the snow-white judge so much the more
Than bloody tyrant reddens all the land!

NOT AT THIS CHANCEL

Not at this chancel kneel ; not at the foot
Of Christ's still crucifix bow down, O Spain !
For bloody offense, fire, steel, and rout, and stain
Of taken slaves ; not on this altar put
Such murderous Cuban candle ! nay, with soot
Smirched in the face from stake and martyrs slain,
O seek not here thy wasted strength again !
Find thou some pagan altar thou mayst loot :
Perchance Cholula's blood-bespattered stones
Will smile on faithless Cortez ; or the proud
Temple of Cuzco bless the Spanish bones
That slew her priests ; or from his clotted shroud
The Moor of Aragon beam for the nones
Upon thy cause : if thou but cry aloud !

SAUL THE KING

Arson doth laugh; grim battle laughs his fill;
The earth, the red earth, holds her quaking sides;
That gaunt guest famine knows where mirth abides;
Fever doth flash her teeth, her swollen heel
Murdering the cheeks of children; the wet steel
Doth laugh, and it have food; each crew that rides
With Death makes merry of the crimson tides:—
Shall old Madrid not laugh with right good will?
Aye, laugh, aye, laugh, old ruler! as that gray
Quibble of Endor, at his witch-moored broom;
Laugh at lean Samuel, from the grave estray,
Tolling his madness (mirth rest on his tomb);
Aye, laugh! laugh! laugh! It is a merry play
When Saul the King flings shaking from the room!

ASH-OF-THE-ALTAR

The censer's cold ; the candle's spent ;
The Priest has closed the sacred tent ;
Breathed on the coal till it is dead ;
Strewed ash-of-the-altar there, instead.

The eastern fire was on his brow ;
His forehead lies in shadow now.
He lived his winter's day, and kept
Faith with the winter stars, and slept.

He knew the summits in the mist ;
He blazed a path with patient wrist ;
His gentle fame is chiseled there :
All that he was of high and rare.

Oh, to the mountain, for the dawn !
And lock the temple : he is gone.
With roses and all wreathèd bloom
Drape the door of the empty room.

HERMON

He sat within his garden-place,
('Twas tree-bloom all around),
Pining to tread the peaks of light
And summits winter-crowned.

"O for the open-minded hills,
With outlook for the soul!
Above the trees and fields!" he cried,
"Where Hermon's waters roll!"

He led me down by palm and pine;
He plucked me roses three;
His sun, his shade, his tangled glade,
He sealed them all to me.

I yielded him my open hills;
He gave me bower and mere,
Which was fair purchase-price, I ween,
For my cold heights austere.

But oh! my lichens drooped and died
In their warm beds below!
And oh! his roses would not bloom
Upon my fields of snow!

The happy hills refused him joy:
Mists crowded to his eyes!
And I: the tangled shade grew red
Beneath the sultry skies!

God made me for the morning peaks,
To dwell with them alone;
God made each yearning thing that breathes
For heaven of its own!

And so I sent him back his flowers,
And hugged my crags of ice;
God give him peace a thousand years
In his rose-Paradise!

SCOT AND LOT

My fingers use no shepherd's craft
To pipe Pan's dancers to thy knee:
No honey-hearted oaten shaft
To shape the Orphic strain in me.

Ah, no! I bring thee more, my friend!
I blow the note where silence falls!
The loudest tone hath soonest end:
The empty are the noisy halls!

PROMISE OF HAWTHORN

A bough of hawthorn buds for me?
To-morrow they will be in bloom,
The life and fragrance of the tree!
Aye, they already change the room!

But why for me, who have not earned
Blessing of hawthorn from your hand?
Whose lighted forge-fires have not burned?
Whose fields still fail of harvest-stand?

Who scarce have added color-dole
To meagerest canvas, good or bad?
No; nor achievement freed my soul
Of any vision that I had?

You say, it is the hawthorn's need
To bear May-blossoms? You esteem
As precious as the ripened deed
The scent and beauty of the dream?

Sure, dawn hath touched them on the brow!
White daylight trembles on their eyes!
And oh, I bless your hawthorn bough!
To-morrow shall be fragrant skies!

IN THE SPIRIT OF ROMANCE

Dark mystery of shadowy waters,
Stars through the branches, comets aflame
On mountain-side and mere,—fair lake,
Fair evening lake, all curve-begirt
With vanishing paths and grassy slopes,
Dark coves and shaded landings, where
The mandolin and soft guitar,
With breathèd song, and blended oar,
In old romance reply : where youth
Reviews the various failing word
In trembling ditty—timid chord
Compelling shy responses : where
Clear chimes from far-off elfin tower
Ring sweetly to low songs of love,
And glance meets glance upon the glass,
And face sees face among the stars :
Where laughing maid shy cavalier
Regards from her safe vantage-seat

Behind soft-clinging Persian silk
That ripples from her hand : where all
Is shadowy, and dim, and curtained
Mistily off from substance things—
O lake! (not lake but elfin pool
While beauty drapes thee well : while veil
From mountain spring and April rain
And costliest dainty dew, in beauty
Sweeps from thy headlands!) how thy banks
Embrace in mystic ring to-night
The happy singers where they glide :
Shape evening's soft horizon-line
Of airiest clouds and lovely deeps
To prosper marvels! Would they might,
Those lovers, riding among the stars,
Ride on forever as now they ride :
Know what they know, have what they have,
My lady's pleasure in her eyes
That she is lovely and desired :
Her true-heart's-love as he is woven
Into her dreams upon the sky !

So might they live in beauty's bloom,
Since beauty is half mystery,
And loveliness revealed in all,
With nothing left to be revealed,
Is heart of loveliness no more—
She what she is, and all beside,
And he forever strong and good:
Nothing but this until the end!

THE PRINCE OF PAUPERS

The Prince of Paupers leaned along his throne
In smoky mood. His laughing court drew nigh ;
Them seemed some one great enterprise had flown
Like wild-fowl to the jungle, that his eye
Grew sombre, and the careless waves did die
From the clear sunny rivers of his soul.
But no avail : it was his day of dole.

Ah, they were poor and merry, every one !
And their pale prince was merriest of all !
Rubies and ruddy garnets had they none ;
No gold-worked arras hung upon their wall ;
No incense from Mukalla or Bengal
Burned in their censers ; naught of price they had,
No meanest taint of wealth to make them sad.

No beryl bracelets ; no jade-wrought brocades ;
No carcanets of gold and burnished pearl :

No inlaid belts nor priceless sabre-blades
With silver-work along the hilted whorl;
No wine-stained crystal, seeming to unfurl
In fragile poppy-petals to the dew;
No: they were poor—this merry-hearted crew.

But now mirth stood with cypress on her head;
The happy feet were stayed; the swirl of dance,
Frozen like foam in winter, whirled and sped
Without a movement, waiting utterance
Of the pale prince. At last he dipped his lance.
“O chiefs,” he cried, “a riddle! This expound,
Why all my camels lie along the ground!”

When none would try the lock, he made demand
Upon the sages of his ragged court,
The wise men of the East, in triple strand
Who bound up wisdom; they had gained report
Out to the desert cell and lone resort
Of farthest learning, for their wizard spells:
Aye, even southward to El Fasher’s wells.

He named his ragged sages ; straight they kneeled.
The first was girded round the loins with skins ;
The second, his brown bosom half-revealed,
Wore goats'-hair tunic ; on the third begins
And ends what may be penance for his sins,
So harsh it is—this is his order's sign,
The fitting vesture at impoverished shrine.

The tanned bell-sage spake soothly to his prince,
Entreating him forget his lover's grief ;
She is not worth the shifting of their tents ;
Her loss is but the loss of a dead leaf,
One grass-blade fallen from the harvest-sheaf.
It is a rival hath her heart away,
Is reason why she will not keep her day.

“That is no reason !” quoth the monarch grim.
He asked the second sage how he should read :
If bosom brown can solve this writing dim,
Why every light he follows doth recede,
And no well more hath water for his need ;

Why he is sad, whose pleasure is not gold ;
Why all his thoughts are darker than of old.

The sage with tender wisdom looked him through ;
He stood long time before the troubled throne,
Then sad and fearless told him all he knew,
What sand-storm kills true love : neglect alone !
Neglect, against love's snowy blossoms blown,
Blackeneth them like fire ; neglect, no less,
Is reason for the prince's mourning dress.

“That is no reason : there was no neglect !”
To sage of harshest garb the prince now turned,
Requiring him to speak his heart direct ;
And if this wizard's word from book was learned
Where truth looms large, it straight shall be discerned.

If not, let Folly have him for her own :
There is no virtue in a cell alone !

The last and oldest sage delays his speech,
Lest his plain-spoken word offend the ear ;

He cannot choose but trace the riddle's reach.
The prince imperatively bids him near,
And stint not of his breath that all may hear.
"Ah, then! your pauper's court is reason true!
Your poverty hath lost your love to you!

"Woman was cast in frail luxurious mould!
Not like the man, compact of godlike thought,
She cannot live care-free in mansions old
The while she ponders how the stars were wrought,
Or solves dim battles that her fathers fought:
She cannot spring in blossom from the plain,
Glad as a tree, at cost of winter rain!"

The Prince of Paupers beat his faded breast:
Him seemed the shaft of truth had reached his heart.
O, it was sorrow for the ragged guest,
And sorrow for them all, to see him start
And wrestle to pluck out the barbèd dart!
"By all the fiends! I shall seek nothing now
But bloody gold, no question where nor how!"

Stepped out a maid with sunshine in her hair,
The light of sixteen summers : she, dismayed
No whit by reason of the sages there,
Stepped forward with flushed face and eyes where
 played

The dawn of womanhood ; calm, unafraid,
She waited for her prince to bid her speak,
Then said her woman's creed in accents meek.

“O Prince, your sages are of wisest men,
But they have never looked in maiden's eyes !
They know all language that is writ with pen,
But they have never read what wisdom lies
In woman's smile, for all that they are wise !
O, I believe them wise in bookish art,
But they have never learned from woman's heart !

“They say *a rival*, say *neglect*, to you !
Those are two letters they have learned, of all
The woman's alphabet ! These will not do,
So they cry *poverty*, with faces tall ;

Ah, they know little who for reasons fall
On such a reason, why a woman's love
Should sink so low from glory's heights above!

"They know full little! O far-cherished Prince,
Your heart can tell you more than wisest sage
Of this life's mystery—the mellow tints :
The silver on the peaks : the smoothed-out rage
Of all this world, when morning strikes the page,
And love, that will not let him be forgot,
Adds happy turn to every tragic plot!

"Aye, far more than can hermit in his cell!
Then, O good Prince, ask not this thing of him :
Ask your own heart, and see you mind it well!
So shall you quaff of wonders from the brim,
And know what truth abides in vistas dim,
Even in the realms of love, that now are near,
And now most distant-cold, with nothing clear.

"They tell you love must have her tinsel-fee?
No! Your betrothed is dreaming now of you,

Your colors in her face, where all can see!
Your drums and bugles pierce her through and
through,
And when they beat retreat she whitens too!
O, if I were a man, I think that I
Should soon find where the honey-gardens lie!"

The maiden ceased, and fear ran up her face;
With timorous outward glance she shrank aside,
Ran hotly through the crowded, silent place,
And found the shaded gardens, where her pride
Took refuge with the roses, breath denied.
There she made tarry till the care died down
Her snowy hand had brushed from prince's crown.

"Now, by my beard, she is the sage of all!
Bugler, blow steed and stirrup, and no let!"
The Prince threw off his melancholy pall;
His dismal tones returned to cabinet
With curious vases and old carvings jet;
He drew his happy hand across his eyes
And left them cloudless as the desert skies.

No more he spake, but sprang to saddle-trough ;
Straight the dust hid him that his riding raised ;
Far down the highway came his merry laugh,
Till distance took him wholly ; not amazed,
His chiefs and merry men that laughter praised
Resumed their mirth and waited him again,
Who could not ride with care, or would not deign.

So ends the story : laughter, day and night !
The fairest bride in all the world, I ween !
The happiest prince that ever worshiped light !
These blissful lovers kept their bridal green
In chambers of the sun where love had been
A ragged guest a thousand years before !
Allah them keep from care a thousand more !

And she that led them had her worship too !
The modest maid that saw the riddle right,
She was not last in service that she knew ;
She rides among the stars, forever bright !
Oh, when her children crowd the paths of light,
Allah them keep in knowledge of the heart
A thousand years, to prize the pauper's part !

MISSION CARMEL

I

O magic of old courts and twilight halls!
Print from a block out-fashioned, as they tell,
Gray Carmel by the sea! thy ruined walls,
Dim bones of walls, all in a ruined dell,
Still do they bear the Ave Mary bell,
Still flash with cross and censer; though the blast
Inhospitable grind, and stormy knell
Break on their clay, still guard they to the last
The peace and restful beauty of their gentle past!

II

The misty morning's frosty finger-tips
Lay lightly on her brow uncrimsonèd;
But oh, what crimson fluttered on her lips!
And oh, what echoes echoed soft, and fled
Back to their bosom, hiding all their red

Behind the snowy veil where crimson stays!
Estelle the grave, with summer-bended head!
Such was my guide by hall and ruined ways,
While all the walls grew sweet with bloom of other
days.

III

Alas! for old romance and idyls sung:
For Jason's fleece, that nibbled precious root
On the hale hills of Or when song was young!
How can she sing wide eyes and golden suit,
Who hath not tasted yet such honeyed fruit?
What should bud know of roses? Yet this lay,
This master-music, a sweet-tongued recruit,
Whose songs of love and life were learned to-day,
Sings on the king-note clear as braided minstrel may.

IV

Sings on the king-note; a heart's master-need,
And how the hope that fadeth blooms anew!

How Eleanora, who each rosary bead
Tells off to the sad Virgin as her due,
Stands in her sunset casement! Through and
through
The glory stains her marble wondrously;
Trembling she stands, till she is western too;
She knows not, save her shrine, what else can be
So dear as gold and pearl when sun sets in the sea.

V

So ran the legend: long ago it fell!
O still she stands a-brooding, all her dreams,
Like sparks in paper, weaving vagrant spell,—
Stands in her casement, thinking how it seems
To scriven magic name in starry beams;
And still Benito creepeth down the night,
All her heart's love. with eyes where worship
gleams,
Even from their caverns black, with lovely light;—
And still the vision fades that burned so tender
bright!

VI

She sighs, and fingers her heart-easing beads,
And burns white prayers at shrine of maiden blest ;
Yes, night by night she listens for the steeds
Of her winged lover riding in the West ;
The fierceness of her hope destroys her rest ;
Sometimes she dreams he beckons, crowned with
 light ;
Sometimes when she awakes she hears her guest
And runs to meet him with half-veiled sight ;
And sometimes, ah ! she fears, and shuns the vision
 bright !

VII

At last he came. Oh, then her gardens rang !
“Love Eleanor, love Ellen, come with me !
Oh, hasten, hasten, hasten !” soft he sang,
“To the steep mountain paths and canyons free !
There, there,” he said, “from every balmy tree
And shrub of healing we will glean our weal !

Through all the years," he whispered, "there will
we
Each day to memory new treasure seal!
There, there, at shrine of love together let us kneel!"

VIII

" 'Tis weary work," she sighed, "to win a maid
And fight her battles down the dusky lane!"
"My sword has ancient need of war," he said.
"Yes: but my shadows are impinged in vain!"
"If not your ghosts," he said, "then mine amain!"
Their venture called. "Then let us flee the feud,"
She said, "while skies are starless to our gain!"
Their gain! That chemist night such ink had
brewed,
No more was faintest light in all the world accrued.

IX

"O moon!" she cried, "that sweetly hides her flame
In sour eclipse and smoky swart constraint!

O stars!" she cried, "for Aphrodite's fame
That veil their too-bright beams at lovers' plaint!
O tender vital earth! whose sooty taint
Is not now cloud," she cried, "but bridal robe!"
What speech she uttered sounded far and faint;
Then died to silence, lest her breathing probe
This bubble joy she nursed, and shatter such frail
globe.

X

Her wings were eager for adventures new,
And one she loved would guide her, for the rest;
With pinions stretched-out wide to bear her
through,
Softly this fledgling fluttered from her nest;
And black night took them, faith and faith abreast;
Thousand-year gorges hid them down the world;
And ever one sure pathway paid their quest;
And always brighter one dim scroll unfurled,
Which was that dream their life, where their dark
future curled.

XI

It was the dawn. A stain crept up the sky ;
The night had not yet brushed her eyes of dew ;
Round the cool earth the cloak was gathered high
Of sleep, and not a dream - thought showing
through ;
With drowsy gems and star-heart tears of rue
The yucca's nodding spires were mounted bright ;
And cactus regiments stood where they grew,
Confederate and armed, to guard all night
The beautiful silent desert till the morning light.

XII

The stain grows older round the serrate edge
Of Orient heaven ; now th' enkindling swell
Leaps up behind the sharp horizon-ridge ;
And now the East has bloomed in beauty-bell
Of blossoms from the sea—petalled in shell
And streaming with pearls and coral, and the stray
Fire of blood-amber ; now the sentinel

Crag-tips flash flame; and now lord infant day
Flutters a million windows with his court's array.

XIII

Oh, steel against steel, and how they fight for life!
Pursuit has tracked them through the desert-
dust,—

José the hunchback, and his men of strife!
Oh, useless there Benito's frame robust!
Bootless that Ellen screams when scream she must!
Soon he is seized and bound, and she is bound;
They hear their doom where they are thrown to
rust;

Faintly they hear faint hoof-beats 'gainst the
ground,
Then but their breathing hear, the only desert sound.

XIV

Stout binding-webs those spider ruffians spun;
With leathern thongs wedded the bridal pair;

Left them beneath Mojave's cloudless sun.—
Holy Maria! hear a suppliant's prayer :
Two webbed and corded skeletons lay there!
They saw them from the future, where they lay :
For desert bones are white, and to despair
The centuries all swiftly slide away!—
There meshed and bound José the hunchback left his
prey.

XV

Holy Maria, hear a suppliant's prayer !
All day they lay beneath the desert sun,
And evening came, and dawn, and stifling air
Blew o'er them till the stifling day was done
And evening came again ; speech had they none,
But lay half in a swoon beneath the stroke,
And dreamed of canyons, where cool waters
run,—
Then dreamed of spiders and harsh desert-folk :
Dreamed all of fiends and spiders ; and at dawn they
woke.

XVI

Holy Maria, hear a suppliant's prayer!
Spiders about them, spiders all around:
Spiders, that loosed the fettered ankles there,
And swollen wrists, and raised them from their
 swound,
And bathed their burns with lenitives renowned!
It was a caravan of holy friends,
Brown mission priests, across the desert bound,
Who came with no fierce fire to push amends,
But glowed with saintly love, that all in service
 spends.

XVII

They gave the lovers their own saddle-beasts
And rode on swiftly to a shaded well,
Far in the desert, known to mission priests;
Then on, until the Ave Mary bell
From Carmel's towers usurped the desert spell,
And they were home. They led the strangers in;

They heard the honey-gall they had to tell ;
They gave them cloistral refuge, ivy-green.
Ah, then ! the cool arcades how eloquent-serene !

XVIII

With praise how eloquent and joy how full !
Through shaded court they wandered hand in
hand ;
By splashing fountains filled with waters cool
Seated, they told their love ; or on the sand
By the sweet sea they breathed the breezes bland ;
The final peace, the last repose, was there ;
Where there was need, they were the first to stand ;
In every willing service they did share ;
But when glad task was done love knew no more of
care.

XIX

And there the hills—O miracle complete !
The hills were all awash with popped gold :

The native poppies, flashing forth in sheet
Of instant fire the life hid in the mould
About their roots; the fertile soil could hold
No more; and when the breezes took their tops,
Lifting the golden petals fold from fold,
They paled to silver-and-amber, dashed with
 drops
Of green, and crimson bells, and waxen buttercups.

XX

Who then but Eleanora loved the flowers?
Who but Benito loved the fragrant breeze,
The sea's salt breath, in pyramidical showers
Spilling the heavy blossoms from the trees?
Who but these two were eager all to please
The pastor priests, that soothed their desert-
 plight?
The sweet-breathed kine, the organ-wingèd bees,
The birds, the chimes, the songs, the moon at
 night,—
Where but at Mission Carmel was there such delight?

XXI

There they were happy, long ago : and still
Their music lingers ; still the silvern lute
Trembles to touch of passion, by the skill
Of song and story threading that old suit ;
And still are Carmel's gardens sweet with fruit ;
Still strewn her desert courts with summer snow ;
Still her towers vocal that for aye are mute ;
And her brown priests, the singer bids me know,
Still do they smile on lovers as in long ago !

XXII

When that Estelle reclathed these happy walls
She turned to rob them of their softest grace ;
She would have shunned the legendary halls ;
And when I spoke she turned away her face ;
And then the woman in her ebbed apace
And the white lilies mounted to her brow ;
Then blood-red roses blossomed in their place ;
And then she fled,—or stayed ! no matter how,
For there the story ended, as it endeth now.

THE ROSE OF DEATH

I

It was a brown old convent-hall;
Far from the world it reared its wall
 In gardens of the sun;
And there were monks to pray within;
Pale monks, who scourged their souls of sin
With ashes of penance, peace to win
 When their harsh day was done.

II

Oh, our good Christ in heaven above
Healed them and clothed them with his love;
 So well Christ by his power
Loved them, he held back sudden death,
But sent, to shape their passing breath,
A white rose from no earthly wreath,
 To tell their dying hour.

III

Ever and aye, for gentle sign
How Christ smiled on their lonely line,
 That rose of grace came down ;
And always the dead saint for shrift
Withdrew in cloister, where to sift
His life's last pearls from the shore-drift
 To deck his burial-gown.

IV

“Mine eyes, would they might see the sign,”
Quoth Carlos, “and that rose were mine,
 To blaze upon my couch !
Oh, long and long I wait the day,
Thou alabaster Christ ! to lay
This sinful corse in earth away,
 And seal the rood's avouch !”

V

Fèlix, how can he love his life :
Carlos, why should he tire of strife :
 The frail frame and the strong ?
For Fèlix, health dwelt in the moon :
His world held no such precious boon :
Ah, sure, he should not care how soon
 Christ haled him to His throng !

VI

Yet so it was. At vesper bell
Lame Fèlix dragged him from his cell,
 And dragged him back unblest ;
And then he sank into his place,
And lifted soon his weary face :
In his brown couch the flower of grace,
 Christ's stainless rose, was pressed.

VII

“The Sign! and I,” he said, “have died!
The bridegroom taken from the bride:
My life from me so soon!
While Carlos kneels for that cold kiss
Until his winter’s evening, this
My youth fares ill, and may not miss
Cruel eclipse at noon!”

VIII

There Fèlix gazed it in the eye,
The Sign that came to help him die.
Alas! he could not pray!
Alas! alas! with ragged feet
He creeps out to the argent-seat,
And then, alas! from the brown sheet
He steals the rose away.

IX

Steals it away beneath his gown,
And soon, alas! the flower lays down
Where no one sees him go;
He strews it where Saint Carlos sleeps;
Lays it on his smooth couch, and creeps
Back to the vigil that he keeps,
And breathings fast and slow.

X

Betimes turned Carlos to his cell:
And raised his eyes; and straight must tell
In gold all he did see!
New wisdom smoothed his visioned brow:
Song kissed his lips: for him the bough
Bloomed and bore fruit, and none knew how,
Of earth's old poesy.

XI

“O coal from odorous incense-jar :
O rose! how sweet to me you are!
I burn you into my breast
And live,” he cried, “at last, at last!
Scar on my breast, I hold you fast!
Home pennant, I break you from the mast:
So sail we into the West!”

XII

Good Carlos counts his dying beads
(The token lights him all he needs),
His sins for to atone;
Before the knotted cross he kneels:
Down on the blistered flags he seals
His aching knees, till morning steals
O'er him, and the white Son;

XIII

He bends his beads again and again
Till glory breaks in the East. Amen.

All night, till night is dead
And burning on her funeral pyre :
All day, in light of that bright fire
Till it dies out, the prostrate friar
Humbles his wintry head :

XIV

Kneels in the fragrant twilight air :
Kneels, till they find him murdered there,
All crimson where he trod ;
He had no white rose in his hand :
There was no snow where he did stand :
The token-flower burned like a brand :
Turned red with his heart's blood !

XV

They stood and marveled, every one ;
They kneeled and said hush'd benison
 Where his white frame was shed :
And they laid Carlos in the ground,
Drew clods on him, and pressed him round,
And laid the red rose on the mound
 Forever to mark his bed.

XVI

Fèlix they buried by his side ;
And oh, they marveled how he died
 Whom Christ called not away !
And oh, they marveled at the bloom
That sprung from Carlos' crimsoned tomb,
And why nor bud nor blade May's loom
 Wove from his neighbor's clay !

XVII

But most in this they marveled, how
Nothing of white but failed, since now
 Saint Carlos died amain;
How murder lost all love had earned;
How the bright flower of omen burned
No more; Christ's grace no more returned,
 Nor aught of Sign again!

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